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Atari Online News, Etc.  
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->From the Editor's Keyboard  
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

The inventor of the snowblower should get a medal! We got another foot and a half of snow on Monday. Boston, just 20 miles south of us, set a new single storm record of 27 1/2 inches - just four-tenths of an inch more than what we got during the Blizzard of '78. What part of "Enough Already!" doesn't Mother Nature understand?? Fortunately, the area was prepared for this storm more than it was 25 years ago. I actually had no problems getting to work on Tuesday. I cleaned my driveway of about six inches of snow Monday afternoon. On Tuesday morning at about 5:30 (much to the dismay of my neighbors, I'm sure!), I got the snowblower out again and quickly dispatched another foot of snow. It was really light stuff, so the job was quick. The roads were clear - another sign of terrific preparation and follow-up. I was actually surprised to learn that the hospital where I work cancelled all three thousand of its outpatient appointments for the day. Still, I had to report, as did my staff. It was a long day!

At least the weather has improved the past couple of days. The sun has been shining and the temperatures actually made it into the 40's - a heat wave! The snow is melting, thankfully; but I think most of it is going to be around for quite some time yet. And, we may get even more snow this weekend.

Speaking of inclement weather, the internet has been the focus for quite some time of its own version of inclement weather: spam. While it's true that spam has been the bane of internet and e-mail users for a long time, it's really starting to reach epidemic proportions! Even in the past 3-4 issues of A-ONE, articles pertaining to spam have grown. There's definitely a war going on to battle this garbage. And I'm not sure that this war can be won by the victims! Spam is as bad as telemarketing. But at least I can verbally abuse telemarketers if I choose to answer their calls; with spam, I have little recourse. I can't even reply to their garbage and have them read some choice words of wisdom - they have their e-mail addresses so camouflaged that a message would bounce back. I really hope that some enforceable laws are enacted and spam-blocking techniques get perfected. I also believe that e-mail address "harvesters" should be fined. And I could go on.

Until next time...

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## GEM-Elite Has Been Banned

Hi all!

A sad day has come to pass. Frontier Developments Ltd has requested the withdrawal from distribution of Elite: The New Kind (E-TNK) by Christian Pinder. All ports of the game have to be withdrawn also. This affects the Atari port which was released by Christian Putzig as an entry into the "Little Big Competition" by MagiC Online.

Here is the post from alt.fan.elite that announced this:

On 10 Feb 2003 20:45:46 , Christian Pinder wrote:

```
>Hi all,  
>  
>I received an email from David Braben today. He has requested that I  
>remove all Elite materials, E-TNK (binaries & source) and all  
>derivatives from my website. David is one of the copyright holders of  
>Elite and is quite within his rights to request this. I am, of  
>course, full complying with this request and have removed E-TNK from  
>the NewKind website. I must also ask anyone who may have E-TNK, or  
>one of it's ports/derivatives, available for download to remove it  
>from their website.  
>  
>--  
>Regards,  
>Christian.  
>http://www.newkind.co.uk  
>.
```

I have therefore removed GEM-Elite from my website, and request that others do the same.

Cheers for now!

James

## Email Your Interest in the SuperVidel

We're working on a graphics card for the CT60 accelerator, that will be 99% hardware compatible with the Videl, but also add a few extras. For you who haven't heard of this project before some of the main points are:

1. Resolutions of up to 1600x1200x30bit @85Hz
2. 64MB DDR SDRAM graphics memory with a (theoretical) bandwidth of 2.1GByte/s.
3. 100% Videl hardware register compatibility, so most games will run with only a minor patch to the binary code. This patch is needed because Graphics Memory is a totally new concept to the TOS/MiNT/Magic OS.

Before memory had only be distinguished between STRAM and FastRAM.

4. Thanks to the onboard FPGA (that acts as the Videl), future extensions are possible like MPEG decoding, 3D polygon drawing/texture mapping, "Super Blitter", and more.

Currently we would like to see how many people are interested in buying our graphics card. Visit our site for more information, and send us an email if interested. Info can be found under the "Projects" and "News" sections.

<http://nature.atari.org/>

#### Atari800 1.3.0 Released

New version of Atari800 emulator has been released and is available for download in five different binary packages for various machines and operating systems (Linux RPM, Windows, WinCE, DOS, TOS).

This new version brings new HIFI sound, cycle-exact Antic emulation and more.

<http://atari800.atari.org>

#### GEM v3.11 To Be Converted To Atari

Work has just begun on an adaptation of GEM v3.11 From the 8086 Pc to the ATARI ST range of computers, when finished it will add a range of functions already found on GEM 1 and will significantly improve on the ST's capabilities

When completed it will run from 2 Floppy disks and will need a minimum of 2Megabytes to work.

(No URL or contact info available yet.)

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Game Over?

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

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## Game Over?

You hear that video games are hot, but even the companies doing it right, like Electronic Arts and Grand Theft Auto specialists Take-Two Interactive, are hovering near 52-week lows. While Might & Magic and Tomb Raider are household brands, the companies behind the games, 3DO and Eidos, can be found in the penny stock bin for roughly two bucks a share.

So, the game makers aren't shedding any tears after peer THQ warned of a substandard fiscal 2004 last night. Truth is, they're all cried out.

THQ publishes a wide range of games on all of the popular home-console platforms. From games featuring Viacom's Nickelodeon characters to the World Wrestling Entertainment franchise that put THQ on the map, the company had been able to license itself into some semblance of prosperity. While the company hasn't hit many out of the park since the wrestling craze died out, it's become proficient in bunt singles. But that isn't good enough these days.

In December, the company warned that holiday sales weren't up to snuff. While others had no problem moving blockbuster titles, THQ struggled. The software house was able to post higher sales in the December period, but margins got pounded, and earnings during its seasonally stronger quarter came in at just \$0.41 a share. While that was in line with the company's hosed forecasts, it was well off the \$0.75 a share THQ earned a year earlier.

If you're a GameCube owner, be afraid. Be very afraid. The company is calling off many of its Nintendo titles, as the console continues to fall behind market leader Sony and the upstart silver medalist, Microsoft's Xbox. Last month, Activision also weeded out some titles from its pipeline.

The company is taking a quarter off as it realigns its fiscal year to end in March. Unfortunately, it won't be the pause that refreshes. For its new fiscal year, which starts in April, THQ is looking to earn no more than \$0.85 a share. That's unfortunate considering it was able to earn \$1.01 a share in 2001.

The company's corporate page states, "THQ is among the fastest-growing video game publishers in the world." No, that's not quite true anymore. And what a small, small world it has become.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

It's a daily ritual that almost everyone with an e-mail account performs: deleting "spam."

Offers for kinky sex, penis enlargement, bargain mortgage rates, pizza-only diets and scores of other dot come-ons are glutting e-mail accounts, eating up valuable time at work and home and turning people off to a breakthrough technology.

Now as online junk mail piles up -- an estimated 320 billion spam e-mails will be received in the United States this year, according to Jupiter Research -- a California lawmaker wants to allow those on the receiving end to sue spam senders.

Democratic State Sen. Debra Bowen from Redondo Beach near Los Angeles, has introduced a bill making it a crime to send unsolicited commercial e-mails to e-mail accounts in California, and allowing those receiving spam to sue for at least \$500 per violation.

"There was twice as much spam last year as the year before and the amount is spam is increasingly geometrically," Bowen told Reuters. "It's really turning the Internet into a tool of questionable value. I had someone write me to say, 'Spam is turning the Internet into an open sewer, and as the Romans discovered, open sewers are a bad thing.'"

"It's estimated U.S. businesses are spending \$9 billion a year to deal with spam," Bowen added. "A quarter to a third of the e-mail being transmitted is spam."

A company with 100 employees could lose \$250,000 a year in lost productivity as workers delete spam, and two-thirds of employees spend more than 10 minutes each day deleting junk e-mail, according to a survey by Web security provider Symantec Corp., said J.P. Gownder, a Yankee Group analyst.

A single state law against spam may not amount to much, analysts say. They note that Congress has been discussing anti-spam measures since 1997 with little agreement and a 1998 California law to curtail spam that Bowen wrote has had little effect, underscoring the difficulty of policing cyberspace.

Some 26 states already have anti-spam laws on the books.

Bowen's 1998 law requires senders of unsolicited e-mails to signal in subject headings they are sending advertising and to include toll-free telephone numbers so individuals may request their e-mail addresses be dropped from mailing lists. Local and state prosecutors may seek misdemeanor criminal charges and a \$1,000 fine if companies ignore the requirements.

Her first law has been largely ignored and only one case based on it has been brought. California Attorney General Bill Lockyer in September used it to sue a marketing company in Santa Clara County Superior Court. The case is pending.

Analysts say network and computer servers, not courtrooms, will be the front-lines for combating spam.

"I don't believe spam will be stopped through legislation," said Jared Blank, an analyst with Jupiter Research. "It will take technology to stem

the tide of spam."

However, Internet marketers are taking a stand against technology proving too aggressive in screening e-mail.

A group of marketers on Tuesday launched an online forum for airing grievances about so-called spam filters. The E-mail Service Providers Coalition hopes individuals will report missing and legitimate e-mail caught in so-called "spam traps."

#### AOL Says Trying Harder to Fight Spam

America Online on Thursday said it would form a task force and seek tougher legislation against spammers to bolster its efforts to cut the barrage of unsolicited junk mail that clutters inboxes with pitches for everything from mortgages to ways lose weight.

The effort comes as AOL, the Internet arm of AOL Time Warner Inc., struggles to build its high-speed business and keep its dial-up subscribers from leaving while contending with federal probes into its accounting and calls from some investors to spin-off AOL if it does not show a recovery soon.

AOL sent out a letter to its 27 million members in the United States and said it is also working to fix some of the other issues subscribers have brought up since late last year -- including pop-up ads and connectivity problems.

It also plans to unveil new tools to fight spam in the coming months, it said in a statement on Thursday.

Internet users have characterized spam as one of the biggest annoyances of using the Web. AOL and rivals including EarthLink Inc. and Microsoft Corp.'s MSN have been unveiling new tools and products to fend it off -- but it continues to persist.

AOL also said its subscribers would begin to see a "noticeable" decline in pop-up ads this month as it eliminates "a vast majority" of third-party pop-up ads and internal merchandise and product pop-ups -- an effort outlined in October.

However, the company has said it may still use pop-ups to promote some offers from AOL Time Warner and its businesses.

#### Microsoft Fights Spam With Subpoenas

Microsoft is looking to burn spammers targeting users of its Hotmail e-mail service with a lawsuit filed in a California federal court last week.

The suit goes after unnamed defendants accused of harvesting e-mail addresses from its Hotmail servers with the intention of spamming subscribers. The "John Doe" suit allows the company to conduct discovery in the case, and issue subpoenas as part of the investigative process of the trial, a Microsoft representative said Wednesday.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in San Jose last Thursday, represents the software giant's latest volley against spammers, which it is targeting through both the courtroom and U.S. Congress.

Last week, the Redmond, Washington, company also turned up the fire under legislators, asking them to pass laws that would make it illegal for spammers to harvest e-mail addresses.

In an essay posted on its site last Wednesday, the company said that it is intensifying its efforts to cooperate with other ISPs and working with the government to enforce current laws against spam, but that "new, strong laws are needed."

Microsoft's push to crack down on spammers comes as ISPs are increasingly hearing calls from customers to help them cut back on the annoying, unsolicited e-mail.

Several e-mail providers, including Microsoft, have introduced new spam-fighting tools to their services in recent months, but the exponential growth of spam has made providers turn to legislative support to complement their technological measures.

#### Waging War Against Spam

Overwhelmed and annoyed, e-mail users worldwide are uniting to stamp out the increased flow of spam targeting in-boxes and inundating computer networks with dubious business offers, miracle drug claims, and increasingly naughty and offensive propositions.

"E-mail users are deluged, upset, and angry about spam," said Alex Eckelberry, president of Sunbelt Software, which makes the IHateSpam filtering software.

But spam fighters appear to have a tough fight ahead of them. According to a recent report by e-mail security firm MessageLabs, spam volume is expected to rival legitimate e-mail this year. In a review of its e-mail threats, MessageLabs said spam currently accounts for 30 percent of all e-mail and will constitute 50 percent of e-mail by July 2003.

What's more, Jupiter Research, a division of Jupiter Media, reports that since 2001 the amount of spam the average e-mail user receives a day has increased from 3.7 to 6.2 messages. That number is due to increase, Jupiter said, and by 2007 e-mail users will receive more than 3900 spam messages yearly.

While these reports are enough to make even hard-bitten e-mail lovers consider switching back to snail mail, other experts say that spam inundation fears are overblown and that highly effective spam-fighting weapons are at hand.

So far there is no consensus, however, on the best methods for fighting spam. Some look to a multitiered approach, such as filtering at the Internet service provider and client levels, with antispam legislation as another safeguard. Others believe one finely honed tool could break the spam business model and restore user in-boxes to their previously



uncluttered states.

After all, expecting users to opt in or opt out of mail lists, or actually track down and sue spammers, is too complicated, they say.

A group of programmers and researchers who gathered at a spam conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge last month were looking for the silver bullet, setting their sights on creating a highly effective spam filter.

"Traditionally, people have thought that spam filtering doesn't really work. That changed in the last year," said Paul Graham, organizer of the MIT Spam Conference and an emerging authority on antispam tools. Graham, who lives in Cambridge, wrote "A Plan for Spam" in August of last year.

He and other spam experts are pinning their hopes on Bayesian filters, which scan the entire content of an e-mail, including header and font information, and classify whether a piece of mail is spam.

The goal is to make these filters so effective that the response rate on spam becomes abysmally low, and spamming becomes a financially prohibitive venture.

"Make no mistake about it--spam is a business," research scientist William Yerazunis told attendees at the MIT conference.

Yerazunis, who works at the Mitsubishi Electric Research Laboratories in Cambridge, hopes to bankrupt that business by proliferating a Bayesian filter based on a programming language he wrote called CRM114. He claims the filter he created using CRM114 can block 99.9 percent of spam, with a similar rate for avoiding false positives.

False positives, or wanted e-mail incorrectly identified as spam, is the key metric when it comes to evaluating antispam tools because the personal cost of missing correspondence from friends, family, or business associates is high.

And as spam conference speaker Jason Rennie pointed out, dealing with spam is not simple, in good part because the definition of spam is personal.

Rennie, an MIT graduate student in computer science working on spam filters, underscored the importance of being able to personalize spam filters to some degree, by allowing end users to dictate what they consider to be spam. A lot of filter makers, and ISPs that offer spam-fighting tools, are taking pains to ensure their clients have as much say as possible about what winds up in their in-boxes.

Although stopping the onslaught of spam is crucial to ISPs' business, given the bandwidth costs of delivering all that unwanted mail over their networks, it is also essential to ISPs not to inadvertently block legitimate e-mail through overly aggressive filtering.

Jim Anderson, vice president of product development for EarthLink, said the spam problem is a major issue at his company.

According to Anderson, EarthLink blocked and deleted 250 million pieces of spam last November alone, and the company is still hearing from customers that they want more controls.

"But the public policy aspect of the spam challenge is that you don't have

unintended consequences," he said.

High on the list of unintended consequences for ISPs is losing customers who feel that not all their legitimate mail is getting through.

For Atlanta-based EarthLink, the solution was offering customers a filter, dubbed Spaminator, that blocks 70 percent to 80 percent of spam from user in-boxes and sends them to a "gray folder" that users can peruse to make sure none of their wanted mail has been trapped.

Other e-mail service providers offer the same kind of service. Yahoo, for example, employs its proprietary SpamGuard filter, which sends spam to a "bulk mail" folder in user in-boxes so customers can still dictate what they think is spam.

In addition to offering SpamGuard to its free e-mail customers, Yahoo offers premium mail customers even more stringent filtering tools. Additionally, the company recently added a "this is spam" link within e-mail messages, allowing them to report an offending missive to Yahoo for future blocking purposes.

"Yahoo has taken a holistic approach to combating spam," said Lisa Pollock, director of Yahoo's Messaging Products.

The multifaceted approach seems to be working. Yahoo caught five times more spam in November 2002 than it did in January of that year, according to Pollock.

Although the growing onslaught of spam has led some to advocate dire measures such as using white lists, where users only accept mail from senders who are stored in their address books, this measure seems extreme. Critics of white lists point out that a long-lost friend who digs up someone's e-mail address would never be able to get a well-wishing message through, nor would associates who recently changed jobs, or Grandma, who just managed to get online.

Even black lists, which some ISPs use to block mail being sent from known spammers, are starting to lose their following because they must be constantly updated and changed.

While Yahoo's Pollock concedes that the growth of spam is a problem, she doesn't believe extreme measures are in order yet.

In fact, Pollock said part of the apparent spam epidemic can be chalked up to the growth in e-mail users. Additionally, she would like to believe her company is trapping more spam because its filters are more effective.

But it appears that no matter how much fine-tuning ISPs do to their spam-fighting tools, the danger of blocking wanted mail forces them to keep the gates open just wide enough so that a certain amount of spam still gets in.

That's where other methods for fighting spam come into play, such as client-side filters.

Since IHateSpam launched its consumer filter last July, it has experienced dramatic growth, said Eckelberry.

"Our product has gotten good word of mouth," he said. "The amount of rage and anger out there over spam is amazing. People are really fed up."

Spam is becoming increasingly risky and offensive, which is leading more people to take action against it, Eckelberry said. But although users have been driven to fight a client-side battle against spam, he said he thinks the war will be on the server side, before users have to deal with it.

Filters, no matter where they are located, aren't the only means being used to eliminate spam.

Many ISPs, like EarthLink, have a group dedicated to tracking down spammers. In fact, EarthLink won a \$25 million settlement against a spammer last year, Anderson said.

But such big wins against spammers are rare, and furthermore, some say that current legislation designed to protect consumers from marketing fraud is not sufficient to deal with the problem.

Such is the view of Jason Catlett, president of privacy advocacy group Junkbusters in Green Brook, New Jersey.

"What I've been advocating is legislation that gives people who have been spammed the right to sue the spammer for a small amount of money - \$50 to \$500," Catlett said.

"User filtering is too late; it's a Band-Aid that doesn't address the problem," he added.

Catlett believes that without legislation hanging above spammers' heads like a sword of Damocles, e-mail could come to a tipping point where there is so much spam that it outnumbers legitimate e-mail, just as Jupiter predicts.

Fighting spammers on a technical scale is not enough, he said, because they are quite sophisticated and evasive in their methods.

Catlett isn't the only one proposing new legislation targeting spam. A number of antispam proposals have been introduced in the U.S. Congress, and at least two pieces of legislation have been approved at the committee level in both the House and the Senate, but neither has received full congressional approval.

Both the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act, otherwise known as "CAN SPAM", and the Unsolicited Commercial Electronic E-Mail Act have languished since receiving committee approval.

The legislative bottleneck has persisted despite the fact that the Direct Marketers Association stated in October of 2001 that it would support federal antispam legislation. The DMA's support is not so surprising, however, given that its 4700 members are also being threatened by the cascade of spam.

"Spam is a huge concern for us because consumers are just erasing everything. They don't know the difference between spam and legitimate marketing," said Christina Duffney, a spokesperson for the DMA. Spam's impediment to legitimate marketing is especially concerning in a down economy, she added, when many DMA members are turning to e-mail because it is less expensive.

But while a number of proposals, such as implementing a labeling requirement for unsolicited commercial e-mail, are being kicked around,

many experts believe that legislation is not the silver bullet. The problem is not only that spam is different for everyone, but also that the nature of spam is constantly changing as spammers work to stay one step ahead of their pursuers.

In fact, a group of Internet experts attending a spam workshop hosted by The Global Internet Project in Honolulu recently outlined their case for taking a multifaceted approach to tackling spam. The group, which included senior executives from major technology and Internet firms, endorsed the adoption of new spam-fighting technologies, end-user education, and rigid enforcement of fraud laws currently on the books.

They warned against looking to new legislation to fight the problem, however, saying that current laws against fraudulent representations already exist, and citizens need to be better educated on how to protect themselves.

As sensible as this multitiered approach seems, dreams of a silver bullet have not died. That's why programmers such as Graham and Yerazunis are working to pull the spam weed out by its roots by destroying its business model.

Yerazunis figures spam filters must be able to route out at least 99.5 percent of spam to make the cost of sending unsolicited commercial e-mail the same as that of sending regular bulk mail.

And while the mail filter Yerazunis created is not fit for the mass market, he hopes one based on his programming language will come to the rescue soon.

Even if e-mail users are armed with powerful filters, the main ISPs must jump on board to significantly reduce the response to spam. This will most likely happen if consumers keep up the pressure to find a solution to the spam problem. After all, it behooves the ISPs to invest in spam-fighting technologies--not just to serve their customers, but also to keep their own costs in check.

Because, as Graham pointed out, spam is a business and the hassle e-mail users and ISPs experience is just collateral damage.

"This is a war we have to win," he said.

### Secure Mail Sharpens Anti-Spam Tools

Saying it's responding to customers' calls for more lethal spam-fighting tools, Tumbleweed Communications is releasing an updated version of its Secure Mail product featuring a new spam analysis engine and update service.

"Our enterprise customers have been asking us for more help with spam," said Tumbleweed Senior Product Marketing Manager Dan Maier.

The release of Secure Mail 5.5, due out early in the second quarter of this year, is designed to further address enterprise customers' spam concerns within a full package of e-mail security and content management tools.

In addition to the software's virus protection and policy management capabilities, Secure Mail 5.5 offers an analysis engine that applies statistical and "heuristic" analysis to e-mail traffic to identify spam. Heuristics analysis identifies patterns that are common to spam, allowing companies to block mail with those patterns.

The company is also rolling out an Internet-based update service that publishes new heuristics to the analysis engine to automate the administration of spam filtering.

Damon Fischer, a systems engineer for Best Buy, uses Secure Mail 5.0 and said he plans to upgrade to 5.5 in good part because of the Internet update service.

"We want to reduce the administrative effort of tuning our spam filters... with 5.5 some of that will be automated," he said.

Fischer added that although spam has become an increasing problem for his company--Best Buy blocks some 40,000 spam e-mails per day--the company does not have one person handling filters.

"We don't have all the resources we would like to work on spam," he said.

Fischer is hoping that Secure Mail 5.5 will lighten the company's load. But although Fischer is enthusiastic about the new Internet update service, he said he will probably turn off the heuristic analysis tool since he fears that it may identify legitimate business mail as spam.

"I'd have to test it quite a bit to make sure it wasn't catching real mail," he said.

Maier acknowledged that companies can't afford to lose mail that's business critical, but said that Secure Mail 5.5's false positive rate is low. He also added that the new product catches 80 percent of spam out of the box, before customers have tuned the filters to suit their needs.

"You can't use a cookie cutter approach to stopping spam," Maier said, "but our customers are finding a lot of value in having a single application that controls e-mail."

Tumbleweed said that it would not quote pricing for Secure Mail 5.5, but that it was on a cost per unit basis.

#### Swiss Crack E-Mail Code

Researchers at a Swiss university have cracked the technology used to keep people from eavesdropping on e-mail sent over the Web, but U.S. experts said on Thursday that the impact would likely be minimal.

Professor Serge Vaudenay of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne found a way to unlock a message encrypted using Secure Socket Layer protocol technology, according to a posting on the research institute's Web site.

However, U.S. cryptography experts said it was not the version of security that most consumers use to shop online.

Rather, it is a version that only affects e-mail, is limited in scope and not widely used, said Professor Avi Rubin, who is technical director of the Information Security Institute at Maryland's Johns Hopkins University.

In addition, an attacker would have to be in control of a network computer located in the middle of the two people communicating over which the messages were flowing, he said. "It's possible, but it has limited applicability," he said.

He said patches are already available to fix the hole, which affects one particular mode of OpenSSL. Like all co-called "open source" software, OpenSSL is free software created by developers who can modify it at any time.

"This is not something that anybody really needs to worry about," Rubin said.

Bruce Schneier, chief technical officer at network monitoring firm Counterpane Internet Security, agreed.

"As a cryptographer, I am impressed. That's really nice work," he said of the research. "As a guy who wants to protect my secrets tomorrow, I don't care."

Besides the mitigating circumstances which lessen the likelihood that attackers would be successful, Schneier said SSL is irrelevant to security because attackers can more easily get at secret information while it is stored on computers and servers at the sending and receiving ends.

"SSL protects the communications link between you and the Web" server, he said. "Nobody bothers eavesdropping on the communications while it is in transit."

#### Hackers View Visa/MasterCard Accounts

More than five million Visa and MasterCard accounts throughout the nation were accessed after the computer system at a third party processor was hacked into, according to representatives for the card associations.

Early indications were that none of the information, which would include credit card numbers, was used in a fraudulent way, according to the representatives.

The associations said they could not provide a timeline of when the breach took place or details on how it was accomplished because it involved a third party processor used by merchants and not Visa or MasterCard systems. The associations said they could not disclose the name of that processor.

Visa and MasterCard are associations made up of financial institutions who issue the cards.

MasterCard said it began to notify its members the week of Feb. 3 that more than 2 million MasterCard accounts had been broken into after the processor told it about the problem, MasterCard spokeswoman Sharon Gamsin told Reuters.

About 3.4 million Visa accounts also have been accessed in the incident,

according to spokesman John Abrams.

"Visa's fraud team immediately notified all affected card issuing financial institutions and is working with the third-party payment card processor to protect against the threat of a future intrusion," the association said in a statement.

Neither Visa nor MasterCard would disclose which institution were involved.

"This is not something regional, it was throughout the nation and could be any bank," Abrams said.

Both associations said no customer would be liable for any charges incurred as a result of fraud. They said the processor was working with law enforcement officials on the matter.

### Liberties Group Opposes Internet Blocking

A pioneering strategy to stem online child pornography is threatening Internet stability because it blocks Web surfers visiting innocent sites located in the same virtual neighborhoods as those peddling illegal porn, a prominent civil liberties group says.

In a precursor to a possible legal challenge, the Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology said it will try Thursday to compel Pennsylvania's attorney general to disclose new details about unusual efforts in that state forcing Internet providers to block visits to Web sites containing child pornography.

Lawyers for the group compared the technique to disrupting mail delivery to an entire apartment complex over one tenant's illegal actions.

Pennsylvania's attorney general, operating under a highly unorthodox state law passed last year, has so far instructed Internet providers with customers in the state to block subscribers from at least 423 Web sites around the world.

The law is unusual because it places risks of a \$5,000 fine on companies providing Internet connections to Web sites with illegal photographs, not on the pornography sites themselves.

"It's sort of this weird world where we're not prosecuting the people producing child pornography," said Alan Davidson, associate director at the Center for Democracy and Technology.

Attorney General Mike Fisher, a Republican, has defended the law and his use of it as an effective method for preventing citizens from viewing child pornography. Citizens can file an online complaint using a form on Fisher's Web site.

"It has worked in nearly every case," said Sean Connolly, a spokesman for the Pennsylvania attorney general.

Only once has an Internet provider disputed Fisher's instructions, and a county judge ordered WorldCom Inc. in September to comply. WorldCom's lawyers, while saying they abhor child pornography, had objected that filters placed on behalf of Pennsylvania citizens would affect all their

subscribers in North America from visiting thousands of Web sites "completely unrelated in content and ownership" as the pornographic material.

Lawyers for the civil liberties group and some technology experts said the strategy in Pennsylvania undermines the Internet's global connectivity by regularly blocking Web surfers visiting harmless sites that may be located on the same server computers as sites with child pornography.

They said they will seek information Thursday from Fisher about his use of the law under that state's open records statute.

In a new study to be published Thursday - coinciding with the group's move - a Harvard University researcher, Benjamin Edelman, determined that more than 85 percent of Web addresses ending in "com," "net" or "org" share computer resources behind the scenes at Internet companies with one or more other Web sites. That is a far higher figure than previously recognized.

Edelman, who said he analyzed 30 million Web addresses over six weeks, said some Web sites share a single numerical Internet address with dozens of other sites. He said this level of sharing, which uses an increasingly common technique called "virtual hosting," interferes with blocking efforts by governments.

In one extreme case, a single Web site, [www.a000.net](http://www.a000.net), shared its numerical address with 970,411 other sites.

Connolly, the spokesman for the Pennsylvania attorney general, said Wednesday that in such cases involving a Web site with a shared address, authorities contact the Web-hosting companies and order them - under threat of legal action - to pinpoint and shut down the illegal pornographic sites.

### Napster Incites Another Lawsuit

German media company Bertelsmann, after writing off a substantial investment in defunct song-swap pioneer Napster, now faces a multibillion dollar lawsuit from a group of music publishers, according to a report published Thursday.

According to the report in The Wall Street Journal, the music publishers are seeking damages of at least \$17 billion, claiming that Bertelsmann contributed to wide-scale infringement of their copyrighted works by funding Napster, which created an Internet song-swapping service based on peer-to-peer technology.

The plaintiffs, including the songwriters Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, allege that Bertelsmann's decision to provide funding to Napster prolonged the service's life and thus the illicit sharing of music, the Journal reported.

Rocco Thiede, a spokesperson for Bertelsmann in Germany, said he had no knowledge of the lawsuit and no comment other than the company's official statement on the online music venture: "Napster was never a Bertelsmann company."

The lawsuit adds a new chapter in the short but heavily litigious history of Napster.



According to the Journal report, the same plaintiffs in the original suit against Napster, which forced the company to discontinue service two years ago, are going after its biggest funder, Bertelsmann, in a move that could encourage media companies to sue deep-pocketed backers of controversial file-sharing services.

Bertelsmann invested over \$100 million in Napster, according to the company's annual report.

In November, software vendor Roxio acquired the remaining assets of the song-swapping company immediately after a bankruptcy court in Delaware approved the deal. The Santa Clara, California, supplier of CD-burning software agreed to pay \$5.3 million in cash and stock for Napster's intellectual property, including domain name and trademarks, and extensive technological portfolio.

#### Overture Says to Acquire AltaVista

Internet search company Overture Services Inc. on Tuesday said it would acquire Internet portal AltaVista Co. from CMGI Inc. for \$140 million in cash and stock.

Pasadena, California-based Overture, which provides pay-for-performance search results to partners like Yahoo Inc., said it would pay AltaVista with common stock currently worth \$80 million plus \$60 million in cash, plus the assumption of some liabilities.

Overture said the deal is expected to close in April and will add to its earnings by mid-2004.

#### Microsoft Acquires Virtual PC From Connectix

Microsoft Corp. on Wednesday announced that they had acquired Connectix Corp.'s Virtual PC products, including Virtual PC for Mac, Virtual PC for Windows and Virtual Server. Microsoft also hired many of the Connectix employees that worked on the products to continue development.

"What this means for Mac users is that Microsoft's Macintosh Business Unit (MacBU) will be responsible for supporting and shipping all current versions of Virtual PC and development for all future versions of the product," Tim McDonough, director of marketing and business development for the Macintosh Business Unit, told MacCentral.

"Adding Virtual PC to its product portfolio is yet another example of Microsoft's continued commitment to the Mac platform," said Ron Okamoto, Apple's vice president of Worldwide Developer Relations. "For 14 years, Virtual PC has helped people who want to own a Mac but need to run legacy PC applications. We're glad to see Virtual PC go into such good hands."

The MacBU has made several announcements recently for Mac users, including forthcoming support for Exchange servers in Entourage and MSN for Mac OS X. Development of the next version of Microsoft Office is also ongoing, something McDonough says shows the ongoing commitment of the MacBU to the

platform.

"This is just another sign that we're committed to the Mac by broadening the products we bring to the platform," said McDonough. "This is a product we will continue to offer and improve."

McDonough said that the acquisition of Virtual PC fits in well with the MacBU's strategy of offering Mac users compatibility with their Windows using counterparts. Applications like Microsoft Office allow near seamless integration between platforms and the MacBU will work to make Virtual PC work even better with the Windows OS and Windows-based Microsoft applications.

"This fits very well with how we look at our strategy -- this is all about compatibility," said McDonough. "Our products are all about letting Mac users be compatible with people running Windows; this is a natural extension of that strategy."

While Microsoft has no immediate plans to change Virtual PC for Mac, they do have a development team, marketing and planning teams already in place and are evaluating the product line. Microsoft is looking at the current product roadmap from Connectix and will decide where to take the product at a later date.

With the inclusion of Virtual PC into the product line of the MacBU, Microsoft will now support the Virtual PC application, the operating system that runs in Virtual PC and any Windows-based Microsoft applications that run in Virtual PC.

The goal for the MacBU is to have seamless compatibility between Windows and Mac OS X, according to McDonough.

"We think this is a great thing for the future of Virtual PC," said McDonough. There is probably nobody better than the Mac Business Unit at Microsoft to bring Windows onto the Mac."

### Google Goes Gaga for Web Logs

Search powerhouse Google has snapped up Pyra Labs, the company behind Web log site Blogger, giving it a boost in both Web content and services.

The acquisition, which was disclosed in a posting on the Blogger site over the weekend, will also allow Google to leapfrog into the burgeoning Web log market, which has been gaining steam recently as increasing numbers of Net users discover the ease of use and flexibility that the online publishing medium affords them. Web logs are Web pages made up of short, frequently updated posts, much like a diary.

Four-year old Pyra Labs, which is based in San Francisco, has managed to make a significant foothold in Web logging - also known as blogging - growing its base of registered users to over a million. The basic service is free, although the company does have a premium version.

Although the terms of the deal were not revealed, Pyra founder Evan Williams wrote in a blog posted to Blogger that "it wasn't a case of needing to sell, we were doing well and getting better." He added that the acquisition would mean "great things" for Blogger and its users, however,

and that new offerings are in the works.

Evans will now be working for Mountain View, California, Google as it adds Web logs to its growing cache of Web offerings, including content, image and sale searches, news, a toolbar, and translation tools.

The deal comes two weeks after Spanish search rival Terra Lycos announced that it was adding blogging to its host of services.

The adoption of Web logging tools by major players like Google and Terra Lycos reflects the medium's growing popularity as a way to quickly and easily publish to the Web. While several blog services currently available on the Web are free, it will be interesting to see how the big-name sites use their large audience and deeper pockets to build new, premium Web log tools.

Pyra Labs' move under Google's umbrella was not an easy decision, according to Evans, however. The blog company founder said in his post that it was a difficult decision given his "fiercely independent nature."

"I was only convinced with brainstorming with our people and their people about why and how we could do much cooler things for our users and the Web at an incredibly large scale by being part of Google," he wrote.

Google was not immediately available to comment on its prospects for the deal.

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